

Child Support Report

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New OCSE guide: 'Changing a Child Support Order'

By Adrienne Noti, OCSE

Parents can now find help to request a change in their child support order through OCSE's new guide "[Changing a Child Support Order](#)." The guide explains how to seek a change when a parent's financial situation changes. It also offers state-specific modules to help parents, and people who work with parents, understand the child support review and modification processes.

We hope child support agencies will share the guide with parents and stakeholders. Please share both parts of the guide—the [introductory overview](#) and the [map](#) that links to specific instructions for each state, territory and tribe.

Why we produced the guide

The multi-year project to produce the guide was the brainchild of OCSE's federal partners on the [Federal Interagency Reentry Council](#). Concerned about rising debt for incarcerated parents, the council was looking for information to help parents ask for a change in a child support order. The council also wanted parents to know that orders do not automatically reduce when a parent enters prison, even if he or she no longer has the ability to pay. If parents wait until they get out of prison, they will accumulate a past-due balance.


The guide's message to incarcerated parents who have a child support case: If your income or living situation changes significantly, contact the child support office as soon as possible to ensure that the order reflects the new circumstances.

Partnership with the Bureau of Prisons

OCSE worked with the Bureau of Prisons and the Illinois child support agency to field test the guide with Bureau of Prisons staff and incarcerated parents in an Illinois federal correctional facility.

Joanie Weiss of the Illinois child support agency frequently visits the state federal institutions to help incarcerated parents with the order modification process. She describes her experience with the pilot test: "I really appreciated the opportunity to be part of the pilot, and because of our partnership with the Bureau of Prisons staff and the in-reach we have been doing in Illinois federal prisons, we understood the need for the guide and the help it was going to provide. The incarcerated parents who participated in the pilot said that the guide was easy to read and had the answers to their questions about child support, and they were looking forward to sharing this information with their families."

OCSE also developed materials to help Bureau of Prisons staff (unit team leaders, reentry coordinators, and staff in residential reentry centers) demonstrate the guide to incarcerated parents. Through the OCSE partnership with the Bureau of Prisons, every federal



Use the map that accompanies the new guide to find how the modification process works in each state, territory and tribe

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Mother's Day

The child support program honors the nation's mothers and children



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correctional facility will display hard copies of the guide. OCSE and the Bureau of Prisons recorded training for prison staff on how to make inmates aware of this resource. OCSE has built partnerships with the Bureau of Prisons at the national level and in several regions as well.

Reaching incarcerated parents

Workers in local child support offices may want to contact their local correctional institutions to express an interest in helping parents who are incarcerated or in reentry. Every federal prison has a reentry affairs coordinator who can help, too. OCSE regional staff may be able to help you link to Bureau of Prison personnel in the region.

Here are other strategies for child support professionals to engage in reentry:

- Visit corrections facilities or station a staff person at the prison to meet individually with parents.
- Produce videos or other materials to show incarcerated parents.

- Offer modification materials to incarcerated parents.
- Help parents complete paperwork.
- Simplify the modification process for incarcerated parents.
- Address barriers to reentry by providing employment and debt-management help to reentering parents.

Reaching out to help incarcerated parents is a necessary component to right-sizing orders. Improving services for incarcerated, reentering, and unemployed parents will help make child support a reliable source of income for children.

Last month, OCSE got positive feedback after previewing the new guide, “[Changing a Child Support Order](#),” to our partners in the Federal Interagency Reentry Council. Next, we plan to promote the guide’s wide distribution to parents and people who work with parents.

In addition to the new guide, see the new compilation of [incarceration and reentry resources](#) on the OCSE website.

OCSE and Bureau of Prisons partnership growing at state level

The preceding article highlights OCSE’s work with the Bureau of Prisons and the Illinois child support program to field test the modification guide with prison staff and incarcerated parents in an Illinois federal correctional facility. OCSE’s partnership with the Bureau of Prisons has led to activities in several additional regions and states.

OCSE Region II and the **Puerto Rico** child support agency participate in training events at a federal detention facility. Puerto Rico was the first jurisdiction to implement a Memorandum of Understanding between the state child support agency and the Bureau of Prisons. The MOU provides for sharing child support information to new inmates, guidance to Bureau of Prisons caseworkers on child support issues during incarceration and reentry processes, and an order modification process that can be easily accomplished during incarceration. (See details in the OCSE fact sheet “[Child Support Collaboration with Federal Criminal Justice Agencies](#).”)

OCSE Region VII is working with **Kansas** child support and the Leavenworth U.S. Penitentiary to plan onsite child support services for incarcerated parents. Kansas child support staff now offer onsite services (such as debt compromise opportunities, GED, financial counseling, and parenting classes) to noncustodial parents at state correctional facilities. They also partner with community correctional residential reentry

programs. When a reentering parent gets a job, the state can reduce withholding toward arrears to a minimal percent of current support, allowing more income for housing and transportation *and* more hope to keep the job. For more information, contact [Roberta Coons](#) in OCSE.

OCSE Region VIII is working with staff at the Englewood and Florence Federal Correctional Institutions in **Colorado** to learn more about the facilities’ operations, educate correctional staff about the child support program, and assess the most effective approach to having child support services staff onsite to help incarcerated parents. The region’s staff recently offered general child support information at a pre-trial orientation for individuals entering federal facilities and their families, and more specific child support education to incarcerated parents. For more information about these activities, contact [Tracy Graham](#).

To learn more about collaboration with corrections facilities to help parents in prison manage their child support arrears, pay consistent support upon release, and successfully reenter the community, contact OCSE’s [Jens Feck](#), [Diane Degenhart](#), [Michael Vicars](#), or [Barbara Lacina](#).

Also of interest is a [March 2014 Child Support Report](#) article “Lassen County partners with Federal Bureau of Prisons to help inmates connect with children.”



Mother's Day message for my colleagues

I am now a grandmother of five. My children have all left home and two of them have started their own families. I can say hands down that the most important, most challenging, and most fun job I have ever had is being a mom. As a grandma, I get the pay-off with far less work!

I raised my children as a single parent for a number of years. Receiving regular child support—and working two or three part-time jobs—kept us going financially. It takes hard work to raise a child day in and day out. Like many parents, I worried, juggled, and did without to make sure the kids had clothes, food, health care coverage, and a roof over their heads. Often I was out of cash and out of food stamps by the third week of the month. We had plenty of pancakes for supper during that last week!

Being able to turn to safety net programs such as SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program), WIC (Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children), school lunch, Medicaid, and public health clinics helped us get by. As a young mother, I was grateful for the mosaic of services that I

received from my county social services agency during hard times. That is why I encourage child support professionals to learn more about the services available to families in your community, to build partnerships with other programs, and to provide information and connections for the parents you work with every day.

Parents have a huge job—to raise, love and financially support their children. Earning money. Putting food on the table. Cleaning the house. Getting up in the middle of the night with a sick child. Walking the kids to the bus stop. Doing the laundry. Helping with homework. Taking the kids to the dentist. Taking the kids to the park. Teaching children how to conduct themselves. Putting down the phone to listen to knock-knock jokes. For moms and dads, these are “chores of love.”

An inescapable part of being a parent is financial responsibility. Parents do what they have to do to take care of their kids. And kids know when their parents put them first. It costs money to raise a child. That's the bottom line.

The work that you do as child support professionals makes a difference in families' lives. It really does. Take it from me. Happy Mother's Day!

Vicki Turetsky

Paying attention to teen pregnancy prevention

This month, the child support program again recognizes National Pregnancy Prevention Month. OCSE regional offices and state agencies can help spread the word about pregnancy prevention by collaborating with communities to educate teens about financial, legal, and psychological consequences of teen pregnancies and the responsibilities of being a parent.

Child support professionals should pay attention to birth rate data, which dropped to a record low in 2012, according to [National Center for Health Statistics data](#).

Last month, a Pew Research Center article (“[Why is the teen birth rate falling?](#)”) pointed out that in 1960, an estimated 15% of births to mothers ages 15-19 were to unmarried teens. “Today, it has flipped: 89% of births are to unmarried mothers in that age group.”

Since the early 1990s, the teen birth rate has declined steeply (and more rapidly during the recession). The Pew article refers to an [analysis](#) that connected the decline to the flailing economy and—less sex, more contraception, and more information.

The article notes several patterns in teen pregnancy:

- Age: The birth rate for older teens is higher than for younger teens.
- Ethnicity: Hispanics ages 15-19 have the highest birth rate, followed by non-Hispanic black teens. Asians and Pacific Islanders have the lowest teen birth rate. Non-Hispanic whites, American Indians, and Alaska Natives fall in the middle.
- Region: Birth rates are higher in the South, lower in the Northeast, and a mix of higher and lower in the Midwestern and Western states.

The Pew article also notes that [pregnancy prevention programs and messages for teens](#) may also have played a role in the decline. For example, a recent [Brookings report](#) found that MTV reality programs that follow the struggles of teen mothers may account for up to a third of the decline in teen births since the shows began airing in 2009.

In addition to the [Pew article](#), child support professionals may want to visit the HHS Office of Adolescent Health [website on teen pregnancy prevention](#).

A mosaic of services for mothers and families

In honor of Mother's Day, the *Child Support Report* offers a glimpse into several federal program offices in the HHS [Administration for Children and Families](#) (ACF)—the agency that also houses [OCSE](#).

While a deeper look into ACF shows a mosaic of programs that serve mothers and families, this article spotlights four offices: Office of Head Start, Office of Family Assistance, Office of Child Care, and the Administration for Native Americans. The last section highlights services in the Maternal and Child Health Bureau, part of the HHS Health Resources Administration.

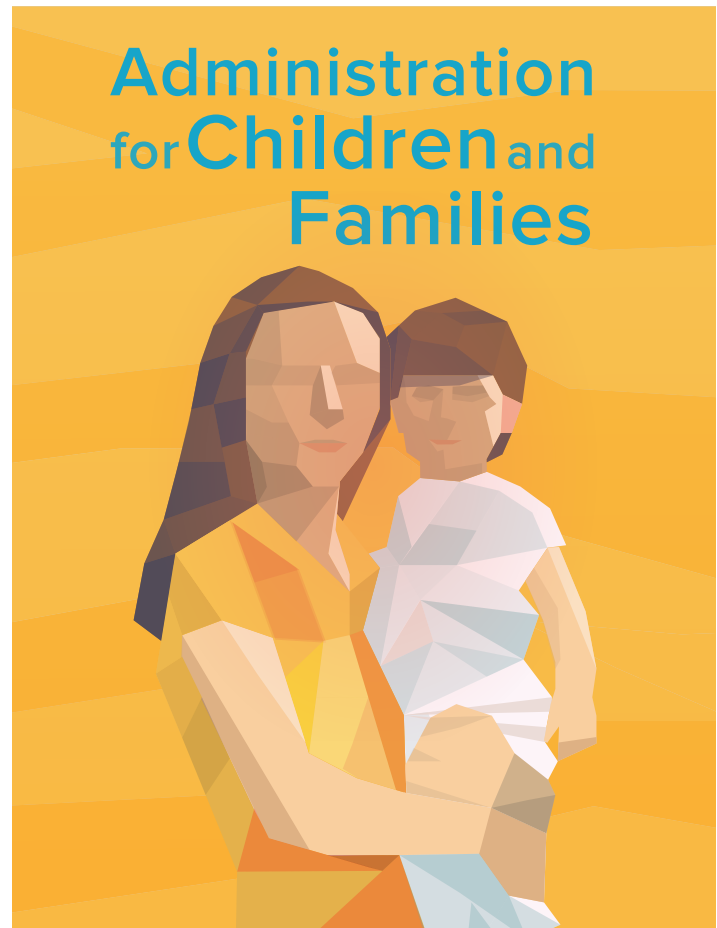
Child support professionals can provide critical information and referrals to parents in need of some additional help.

Head Start

[Head Start](#) and Early Head Start programs focus on nurturing and supporting young children and their families. Early Head Start serves expecting mothers and their unborn children. Managers in the Early Head Start program work with mothers to plan for their child's birth. Managers may use assessment tools (as required by the Head Start Program Performance Standards) to understand the needs of the women they serve, which can help them identify community resources.

One Head Start and Early Head Start success story shares Michael Downey's experience. Michael's mother, Patricia, was a 10-year cocaine addict when she lost one pregnancy, so when she learned she was expecting Michael, something had to change. Because she knew firsthand the pain of a child with an absent mother, she worked to overcome her addiction. Patricia enrolled in community services, Early Head Start, and a residential drug treatment program.

After just seven and a half months of pregnancy, Michael was born. It was evident he had numerous challenges to overcome, both physically and mentally. Michael remained in the neonatal intensive care unit while Patricia entered a drug treatment program. She visited him daily as he grew stronger, and eventually he came to live with her. Soon, Patricia requested that the residential program move her into an outpatient program so that she and Michael could go home. Her request was fulfilled and she contacted the staff in her community Early Head Start program. In Early Head Start, Michael



and Patricia began an intensive program to overcome the developmental challenges he faced.

As a result of their individualized home visits through Early Head Start, Michael advanced greatly and very few of his initial delays are evident. Thanks to the dedication of Michael's mother and the guidance of his Early Head Start program manager, he is a strong, thriving child.

See the [full success story](#) on the Head Start website.

Office of Family Assistance

Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), a grant program in the [Office of Family Assistance](#), helps all members of needy families achieve self-sufficiency. A family applies for the TANF program at their local welfare office. In addition to providing cash assistance, jurisdictions may offer a wide range of relevant benefits and services to eligible families to help them achieve self-sufficiency.

TANF services and benefits may include:

- Employment-specific services such as education, job training and placement, and subsidized employment.
- Parenting skills training, premarital and marriage

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counseling, mediation, and activities to promote parental access and visitation.

- Help with child care, transportation, nonmedical mental health and substance abuse, domestic violence, and developmental and learning disabilities.
- Family preservation, family formation, pregnancy prevention, community development programs, and housing-related needs of families who are homeless or precariously housed.

Along with providing ongoing basic assistance, a TANF program can provide an array of non-recurring, short-term benefits and services. For example, a jurisdiction can provide short-term rental or mortgage assistance (to prevent eviction or help a homeless family secure housing), security and utility payments, moving assistance, motel and hotel vouchers, case management services, financial and credit counseling, legal services, housing search and placement services, and administrative costs associated with any of these activities.

Office of Child Care

Shortly before spring arrived, the [Office of Child Care](#) joined forces with the Office of Head Start to begin developing ACF's newest partnership program to expand availability of high-quality early learning for infants and toddlers. The offices jointly sponsor this new [Early Head Start – Child Care Partnership Program](#). The grant program allows mothers, grandmothers, and other income-eligible family members, along with caretakers and child care providers, to enroll their infants and toddlers in programs designed to meet Early Head Start's high-quality "program performance standards." It also provides comprehensive full-day, full-year, high-quality child care and early learning services through center-based child care or family child care settings.

The new program will award grants by September 2014. It builds on pilots and demonstration grants that implemented strategies for early learning and family-related services in child care programs serving mothers who work full-time or are enrolled in educational or training programs.

The Early Head Start – Child Care Partnership Program offers a [new toolkit](#) to support organizations applying for the program grant. It includes an overview of the Early Head Start and Child Care Development Fund and materials to support partnerships. The toolkit also offers a description of the grant application process, a webinar repository, and an ongoing archive of all federal Early Head Start – Child Care Partnership Program materials.

To determine if their family is eligible for child care assistance, parents should first contact the [lead agency for their state or territory](#) for updates about eligibility requirements and the available services.

To find information in English and Spanish about high-quality child care, contact [Child Care Aware of America](#) at 1-800-424-2246.

Administration for Native Americans

The [Administration for Native Americans](#) (ANA) promotes self-sufficiency for Native Americans by providing discretionary grant funding for community-based projects, and training and technical assistance to eligible tribes and native organizations. ANA serves all Native Americans, including federally recognized tribes, American Indian and Alaska Native organizations, Native Hawaiian organizations, and Native populations throughout the Pacific Basin (including American Samoa, Guam, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands).

ANA's new DREAM Project will enable 27 homeless Pacific Islander women with disabilities to obtain housing and receive therapy, workforce training, and grants for micro-enterprises. Here's the story.

In 2004, the Elim Pacific Ministries founded the Oasis Empowerment Center (Oasis), a recovery center for homeless Pacific Islander women in Guam. These women are facing life-controlling and life-limiting problems including drug addiction and mental illness. Their new ANA project is called Developing Rising Earnings, Aspiring Mothers, (DREAM), which seeks to fill a gap in services for these women.

Homeless shelters in the island can only provide short term, 60-day housing for women and their children, and they do not have the intensive support services to fully address the reasons the women have become homeless, which can be drug addiction, domestic abuse, or untreated mental illnesses (or a combination of these). Oasis provides an intensive 6-month residential drug treatment program, but the women in their program need to focus on recovery, so the job skills needed to sustain their recovery were left undeveloped.

Oasis staff often discovered that these women were swept back into prostitution or selling (and eventually using) drugs as a way to make a living because they often lacked the literacy and job skills to make enough money to support their family. The local workforce agency provides job training, but does not offer the intensive emotional and counseling support that this subset of the population requires to stay on the path to recovery.

The DREAM project provides a 9-month residential program each year of the project. Women who have either successfully completed treatment, or are not drug

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addicted but require intensive services, can focus on developmental and productivity issues in addition to wellness and lifestyle issues to support their full recovery and increase their ability to make a living wage after graduating from the program. This is the first year of their project, and ANA will be funding them through 2016.

Health Resources and Services Administration

Families can find information about their State Maternal and Child Health programs from the Health Resources and Services Administration's [Maternal and Child Health Bureau](#). The bureau helps states maintain toll-free hotlines and runs the National Baby Hotline

at 1-800-311-BABY (1-800-311-2229), which directs families to their state health department for information on women and their infants and children. In addition, mothers can learn about prenatal health services at the Maternal and Child Health Bureau's [1-800-311-BABY website](#). At the bureau's [main website](#), mothers can find links to the National Baby Hotline, as well as to the [text4baby](#) program and [Insure Kids Now](#), which shows details on Medicaid and Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) services for families who need health insurance coverage.

For information about other HHS programs that offer services for mothers and children, see the ACF [Help for You & Your Family](#) web resource page.

RESEARCH

NEW: Two OCSE 'Story Behind the Numbers' fact sheets

By Elaine Sorensen, OCSE

OCSE added two new fact sheets in April to The Story Behind the Numbers series. These fact sheets take a closer look at child support program data to better understand program performance and caseload trends.

Effect of Male Employment on Child Support Collections

The employment rate of prime-age males (ages 25 to 54) has been declining since the late-1960s. At that time, 95 percent of these men were working. Today, 83 percent of prime-age males are working.

This downward trend in male employment is bad news for child support recipients. Child support collections are strongly associated with employment among prime-age males. We find that the 5 percent reduction in the male employment rate since FY 2008 is associated with a 1 percent decline in child support collections.

The fact sheet examines two other factors associated with child support collections: 1) spending on the child support program; and 2) the number of child support cases. Child support spending has been declining since FY 2008, while the child support caseload has remained largely unchanged. The collective effect of these two factors is associated with a 2 percent decline in child support collections.

Given that male employment and child support spending have been declining since FY 2008, we expected child support collections to decline. In fact, they have, once we take inflation into account. These findings suggest that it is going to be difficult to increase child support collections in the future unless male employment or child support spending increases.

Major Change in Who is Owed Child Support Arrears

Did you know that three-quarters of certified child support arrears is owed to the custodial parent, up from one-half just 10 years ago? This shift in the ownership of arrears reflects the continued transformation of the child support program from welfare cost recovery to one that supports family self-sufficiency.

Specific provisions of the Deficit Reduction Act of 2005 appear to have contributed to this shift, including changes to the assignment rules for child support and the expanded federal income tax refund intercept program that now allows the collection of past-due support for any child, whether or not a minor.

Today, states may discontinue any assignment except for support owed while a family receives assistance. They may also distribute (or pass through) all child support collected to current and former TANF families. The federal government will share in the cost of distributing all child support to families, except for child support paid to families on TANF that exceeds \$100 per month for one child and \$200 per month for two or more children.

For more information on these fact sheets, contact elaine.sorensen@acf.hhs.gov.

Chicago project gains trust among homeless veterans

By Geraldine Franco, OCSE Region V



Under a national collaboration that began in 2010 among OCSE, the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), and the American Bar Association, Chicago is one of nine pilot cities across the country addressing child support issues among the homeless veteran population. Marian Scott-Steele, liaison for homeless veterans at the Illinois Division of Child Support Services, is coordinator for the Chicago Child Support Project. Her work with veterans in the past four years, together with her team, has gained her trust among the homeless veteran population in Chicago and its suburbs.

Presence in community

At the project's start, staff set up information sessions at the city's two VA hospitals. During one of the first sessions, the project reached 17 homeless veterans with unresolved child support issues and scheduled follow-up appointments; nine of them followed through with the appointment. Project coordinators were pleased with the turnout, given the transient nature of homeless veterans and the struggles and instability they face.

Since then, the Chicago Child Support Project has coordinated monthly visits to VA hospitals in the Chicago area. Coordinators also attended VA-sponsored Stand Down events and resource fairs, which are the most successful venues to reach veterans who are homeless because they draw large numbers of veterans at one time.

The constant presence of project staff at the VA hospitals and their regular attendance at the Stand Down events and resource fairs has contributed to project success. Homeless veterans who frequent these venues

become familiar with project staff and are less afraid to seek assistance. Those who get help often share their positive experience with fellow homeless veterans. Word of mouth referrals has helped others feel comfortable with staff and ultimately end up seeking assistance with their child support cases as well.

Referrals rolling in

The project has received 500 to 600 referrals from VA hospitals. Among them are homeless veterans, veterans at risk of homelessness, and veterans receiving care at their facilities. According to Scott-Steele, every referral receives individual attention, and each case is "cradled until it is resolved."

Staff labels each case to clearly identify it as a homeless veteran. Cases are never automated and do not follow conventional case-closure criteria. Instead, case managers work closely with child support staff to ensure each case receives appropriate follow-up. VA staff helps to locate homeless veterans when child support staff is unable to reach them, since homeless veterans are more likely to seek assistance from the VA than the child support office.

Because each case gets individualized attention, many homeless veterans have their orders modified, helping them to fulfill their child support obligations. Others, who were unable to work because their driver's licenses were suspended, had the license reinstated with help from the Illinois Attorney General's Office.

Scott-Steele emphasized that this work would not be possible without the individual case-management attention, the partnership with the VA and the Illinois Attorney General's Office, and the support of the Illinois child support program. Project staff feel rewarded when

This article continues our series on change management in the child support program.

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a homeless veteran gets the help to fulfill his or her child support obligation. The project's ultimate goal is to help the homeless veterans become self-sufficient and current on their child support obligations.

The Chicago Child Support Project also partners with the John Marshall School of Law and the American Bar Association. Homeless veterans receive assistance with visitation issues and legal matters outside the realm of child support from these two partners respectively.

Work ahead

The latest report on homeless veterans in Illinois indicates that in 2013, they owed more than \$12 million in past due-child support to the custodial parent, the state, other states, and foster care. Scott-Steele knows more work is needed to reach out to the homeless veteran population, and she continues to explore venues frequented by homeless veterans. Her latest efforts include discussions with Cook County judges who oversee Veterans Courts—an important venue to reach homeless veterans with unresolved child support issues.

In the meantime, the Chicago Child Support Project continues to serve all case referrals from the VA, Catholic Charities, Volunteers for America, and other nonprofit organizations serving homeless veterans.

For more information on the Chicago Child Support Project, contact Marion Steele at marian.steele@Illinois.gov.

More about the national collaboration

Want to know more about the national collaboration among OCSE, the VA, and the American Bar Association? See these two OCSE publications:

A January 2014 *Child Support Report* article: [“Lessons so far: Collaboration helping to end homelessness among veterans.”](#)

An OCSE fact sheet: [“Ending Homelessness Among Veterans: The OCSE-VA-ABA Collaboration Project.”](#)

Next month:

What do OCSE and former NBA player Etan Thomas have in common? You'll find out in the *June Child Support Report*. You'll also learn why the authors of a book about fatherhood moved to an impoverished area in New Jersey, and how their research is influencing child support professionals.

COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

Texas *pro bono* clinic helps veterans modify child support orders

By Patricia L. Barsalou
Assistant Attorney General
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Child Support Division
and Joan L. Gillham
Attorney and Counselor at Law
Dallas, Texas

A new *pro bono* clinic in Dallas held its first session in February to assist 24 veterans with various child support modification needs. The Veterans Child Support Modification Clinic is a cooperative effort among local family law attorneys, the Child Support Division of the

Texas Office of the Attorney General, and a nonprofit organization that serves veterans. By combining targeted services and online registration, the clinic demonstrates how communities can deliver effective legal assistance to veterans.

Homeless Veterans Services of Dallas, the nonprofit organization that participated in the project, operates the Veterans Resource Center where the clinic was held. The stand-alone, one-stop center is located just two blocks south of the Dallas VA Medical Center, a facility that serves more than 113,000 veterans in 38 Texas counties. In September 2013, the center began a program to assist veterans in overcoming legal barriers to obtaining employment, housing and benefits.

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The Veterans Resource Center in Dallas

Dallas attorney and veteran advocate Joan Gillham (*co-author of this article*) developed the clinic format as part of the center's effort to expand legal services to its constituency. Gillham secured the support of attorneys with the Texas Child Support Division's HEROES Project, an outreach program that offers service members and veterans personalized help in paternity establishment, child support, and parenting-time matters. She also secured participation by members of the Family Law Section of the Dallas Bar Association and students from the Southern Methodist University School of Law.

By limiting the issues the clinic would address to those involving child support modification, the event brought together legal professionals with the expertise to correctly identify veterans' specific modification issues and help them understand the processes and challenges in addressing them.

An inventive and highly effective feature of the Veterans Child Support Modification Clinic—likely a first in Texas—is the requirement that veterans register online. Thirty-four veterans preregistered for the first clinic. The veterans' information enabled HEROES Project staff to review their cases before the meeting. After the attendees checked in, HEROES attorneys gave each veteran his or her own case-specific information as permitted by law.

Although some of the veterans did not have child support cases, or had cases in other states, the online registration made the veterans' consultations with *pro bono* attorneys more effective. The time saved enabled clinic staff to give the 24 veterans who attended important information, meaningful consultations, and in some cases, follow up with HEROES Project staff. Some of the private attorneys represented the veterans on a *pro bono* basis. In other cases, HEROES Project staff is

following up through the child support agency.

Most importantly, the experience gave each veteran the opportunity to be heard, and provided explanations to transform a confusing and often emotionally charged legal issue into an understandable and manageable task.

Many attendees left the clinic with a form to request that the child support agency review their case for modification, and a list of action items for completing the form. All left with a much better understanding of their child support obligations.

The Veterans Child Support Modification Clinic will be held quarterly at the Veterans Resource Center with the continued support of the Dallas Family Law Bar and the HEROES Project.

Contact Patricia Barsalou at 512-460-6096 or patricia.barsalou@texasattorneygeneral.gov about the child support agency and the HEROES Project. Contact Joan L. Gillham at 214-324-7665 or attorneygillham@gmail.com about the online registration or other facets of the clinic's design and implementation.



Policy symposium a first for California



By David Oppenheim, Executive Director
California Child Support Directors Association

How does the child support program bring together its various stakeholders for a serious conversation about the direction of the program? The California Child Support Directors Association (CSDA) did it by hosting its first child support policy symposium this March in Sacramento.

CSDA partnered with the National Child Support Enforcement Association to present speakers from academia, the State Legislature, research and nonprofit organizations, and executives from the State Health and Human Services Agency and Department of Social Services to examine the changing American family, opportunities for interoperability, and more.

Among attendees were stakeholders who don't always communicate with the child support program. Through the symposium format, participants could draw connections to the value of working together to improve the respective program outcomes.

State Senator Jim Beall voiced a "call to action" about the need for better coordination and leveraging of state and local service delivery programs to improve outcomes for California's economically disadvantaged children and families. While acknowledging the state's recent gains in program performance, the senator challenged the state child support program to continue to improve and to implement best practices that support an increase in collections. He also challenged CSDA to get the word out about the program and to better educate lawmakers about the program's critical role in supporting families.

In addition to state and county child support professionals and OCSE Region IX staff, the more than 100 attendees represented California's Administrative Office of the Courts, Health and Human Services Agency, Welfare Directors Association, and State Association of Counties.

To learn more about the symposium, see materials on the CSDA website at www.csdaca.org, or contact David Oppenheim at 916-446-6700 (ext. 102) or doppenheim@csdaca.org.

New ACF briefs: Hispanic cultural competence, data collection

The Administration for Children and Families Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation released two research briefs that focus on Hispanic populations. The Hispanic Research Work Group prompted these briefs.

[Enhancing Cultural Competence in Social Service Agencies: A Promising Approach to Serving Diverse Children and Families](#) summarizes the field of cultural competence in social services. The brief is relevant for organizations serving children and families from diverse ethnic and racial backgrounds. It highlights research and strategies in serving Hispanic populations.

[Survey Data Elements to Unpack Diversity of Hispanic Populations](#) presents 10 additional data elements that will improve understanding of the diversity within low-income, Hispanic populations in the United States, if included alongside demographic items that federal research surveys typically collect.

Child Support Report

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